

GUARDIAN

The Best of the Bay ... Every Week

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critic's choice: art

'Catastrophe, Crisis, and Other Family Traditions'

Through Wed/26, Women's Cancer Resource Center

Bay Area artist Jessamyn Lovell makes sense of her chaotic family life by taking pictures of it. The photographs in this show are of her mother, who is stricken with diabetes, paralysis, and depression, and her siblings, who are responsible for their mother's care. The images are therapeutic for Lovell, but they might traumatize an outsider who gazes into this depressing domestic world, with its too-close living quarters, unmade beds, stale air, and general atmosphere of malaise. *Ravioli* is a close-up shot of someone's dinner-in-a-can surrounded by grimy carpet, makeshift bookshelves, a television set, and a woman's fat, bare, unpedicured foot. It seems ironic that Lovell would show her work at the Women's Cancer Resource Center, since it's a place where people with personal crises seek information and answers, and Lovell's photos don't really explain or resolve any of the problems they so clearly depict. *Ariel Dark*, 1998 a picture of her brother's terribly scarred face, includes a caption written by Ariel describing his "tragic accident." But even here we can't find a complete account of what happened. Ariel talks about starting a bonfire and then skips to the part where a helicopter takes him to the hospital. We can guess what happened in between, but Lovell seems deliberately to leave this and many other questions unanswered. Will there ever be any respite for her mother's physical and emotional suffering? Will her siblings eventually escape this dysfunctional home life? She has already begun turning her photographs into a book project, which will almost certainly contain more information — and hopefully some answers. *Tues.–Thurs., 1–7 p.m.; Sat., noon–4 p.m., 3023 Shattuck, Berk. (510) 548-9286. (Lindsey Westbrook)*



ARIEL DARK, 1998, BY JESSAMYN LOVELL

Women's Cancer Resource Center Gallery 3023 Shattuck, Berk; (510) 548-9286. *Tues–Thurs, 1–7pm; Sat, noon–4pm and by appt.* "Catastrophe, Crisis, and Other Family Traditions," photographs by Jessamyn Lovell. Through Sept 26. See Critic's Choice.